

pieces are used, edges of adjacent panels may be alternately spaced from one another, as is shown in FIG. 7(a) or they may be placed contiguously to one another, to have contiguous edges 16 and is shown in FIG. 7(b) or they may overlap one another as is shown in FIG. 7(c). Where panels 12 overlap one another, they have superimposed margins, such margins 14 in FIG. 7(c). This adds the additional appearance of depth to the resulting design. At any rate, after adhering panels 12 to the selected surface, the panels may, if desired, be covered by a sealing and/or glazing compound, such as a polyurethane, lacquer, varnish, shellac and the like, as is shown at step 32. The processing then ends, as shown at 34.

In the preferred methodology, an additional step of dipping is employed between the steps of forming the piece of material into a ball-like mass and spraying the material with pigment. Thus, with reference again to FIG. 2, it may be seen that ball-like mass 62 (FIG. 4) may be immersed, at processing step 40, into a fluid dip which may either be a clear or tinted transparent material in order to form a film on the surfaces of the production blank. For example, suitable dipping materials may include, for example, acrylics, polyurethanes, varnishes, lacquers, shellacs, etc. and the like. During the dipping step, it is sometimes desirable to squeeze the wetted ball-like mass to further enhance creasing and, after completion of the dipping, to wring excess fluid from the mass. Preferably, the dip is a dilute acrylic or an alkyd resin. Where a dip is used, the ball-like mass 62 is unballled at step 42 and is then dried, as is shown at step 44.

Since the formation of crease lines in conjunction with the film form the dip presents aesthetically pleasing designs on its own, especially where the dip is tinted with a background color, it is possible to go directly to the step of flattening and adhering the resulting panel, as is shown at alternate arrow 46 in FIG. 2, without the pigmenting step. However, in the preferred method, it is again desirable to spray the production blank 64 with pigment, as is shown at step 28 or a multiple of pigments as is shown at step 29. This path is shown by alternate arrow 48. Use of the dip material results in the thin film of transparent base that enhances the three dimensional effect produced by the topography of production blank 64, when sprayed with pigment at an oblique angle, and subsequently flattened. It is believed that this enhanced dimensional effect is caused by the almost imperceptible parallax view of the crease lines and the pigment material.

Regardless of whether a single panel is produced or a plurality of panels are used to create covering 10, it is contemplated by the present invention that the resulting covering may be used a pattern for mass reproduction, as is shown at processing step 50 in FIG. 2. Naturally, it should be understood that there is a tremendous variety of reproduction techniques available in the industry which may be implemented with a variety of different media. Thus, it is within the scope of this invention for the resulting covering or panel to be photographically reproduced as a master pattern that is then printed on various surface coverings such as: wallpaper, vinyl covering material, fabric covering material, tile, plastic covering material and linoleum. It should be understood, however, that this list is not intended to be exhaustive but is rather representative of some of the possible media in which the aesthetic design created by

the present invention may be generated on a mass production scale.

As noted above, the present invention is primarily directed to the methodologies of producing decorative coverings. The decorative coverings, themselves are additional claims of this patent application where those decorative coverings are produced by the methodologies described herein.

Accordingly, the present invention has been described with some degree of particularity directed to the preferred embodiment of the present invention. It should be appreciated, though, that the present invention is defined by the following claims construed in light of the prior art so that modifications or changes may be made to the preferred embodiment of the present invention without departing from the inventive concepts contained herein.

We claim:

1. A method of producing a decorative panel adapted to be supported on a surface, comprising:

(a) providing a flat piece of creaseable material which has a memory for creases placed therein;

(b) creasing said flat piece along a multitude of crease lines to form a relatively flat production blank that has a front surface and a back surface and that is configured with a topography having peak portions and valley portions formed by regions of said production blank between various ones of said crease lines; and

(c) spraying a sprayable pigment onto at least one of said front and back surfaces of said production blank in an oblique direction so that said sprayable pigment impinges and is retained on windward sides of said peak portions with said valley portions and leeward sides of said peak portions being shielded from said sprayable pigment.

2. The method according to claim 1 wherein said flat piece of creaseable material is colored.

3. The method according to claim 1 wherein creasing said flat piece includes the step of crushing said flat piece in to a balled mass, then immersing said balled mass into a fluid dip to coat the front and back surfaces thereof and to alter the appearance thereof before the step of unballing said balled mass into said production blank.

4. The method according to claim 3 wherein said balled mass is unballled into said production blank after the step of immersion into the fluid dip and said production blank is dried before being sprayed with said sprayable pigment.

5. The method according to claim 3 wherein said fluid dip is tinted with a background color.

6. The method according to claim 1 wherein said oblique direction is at an angle of forty-five degrees or less to said production blank.

7. The method according to claim 6 wherein said angle is between ten degrees and thirty degrees.

8. A decorative panel product made by the method of claim 6.

9. The method according to claim 1 including the steps of providing a plurality of sprayable pigments, and spraying at least one of a plurality of sprayable pigments onto said one of said front and back surfaces of said production blank, each sprayable pigment being sprayed in an oblique direction whereby each said sprayable pigment impinges on and is retained on said windward sides of said peak portions with said valley